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ABSTRACT

To learn what techniques work for motivating staff members of student newspapers, questionnaires were sent to 203 high school newspaper advisers, mostly in Ohio. Of these, 112 responded. The advisers were asked to indicate each technique listed in the questionnaire that they had tried and to evaluate the technique as a motivator. Individual conferences, professional media recognition, bylines, and field trips were generally thought to be of value in motivating staff, while awarding pins, cups, and certificates was thought to provide little motivation. The major source of motivation was thought to be the enthusiasm and personal involvement of the adviser. (The questionnaire is included, along with reactions to each technique.) (TJ)

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INCENTIVES FOR MOTIVATING STUDENTS ON A HIGH SCHOOL NEWSPAPER STAFF

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INTRODUCTION

The high school newspaper adviser faces the task of turning out essentially the same kind of product every two weeks or every month. A staff consisting of typical students can get bored. The adviser must remain optimistic and enthusiastic. Only when a student is challenged and rewarded for quality work will he be motivated to continue working productively through the year.

Many traditional awards are given to staff members, usually at an honor assembly, to recognize their contribution to the staff. A single award at the end of the year, however, is not enough to motivate a high school student through 15 issues of a newspaper. He must receive encouragement during the year to show him that his work is appreciated and is worthy of his time.

There is little research dealing with creating conditions or techniques for motivating staff members.

In this study, incentive will be defined as anything tangible or intangible that prompts action. The motivation within the student is spurred by awards or rewards the adviser offers while making the daily work enjoyable and challenging to himself and to the students. Recruitment of a staff will not be considered to be part of motivation in the limits of this study.

As one respondent noted, "We use all the methods suggested, and it is no exaggeration that staff morale is as important to staff satisfaction in the paper as any single aspect of teaching journalism."

METHOD

A survey was mailed to 203 high school newspaper advisers. A total of 178 high schools were selected randomly from an Ohio list of high schools according to ZIP code. Two questionnaires were returned with the notation there was no newspaper at the school. Twenty-five surveys were sent to "award-winning" newspaper advisers, obtained from a list of Journalism Education Association (JEA), Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA) and National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA) contest winners. Twenty were returned.

Responses numbered 112 for a response percentage of 56 per cent. The survey was sent once more to persons who did not respond. The survey was conducted during the 1975-76 academic year. The list was compiled from published articles and surveys.

DEMOGRAPHICS

To profile the advisers who answered the survey, answers to the questions on the first page were categorized and tabulated. Of the respondents, 23.2% were first-year advisers and 16.1% were second-year advisers. Others ranged from two to 20 years of advising with one person having advised 43 years. The mean experience was 5.214 years with the median as 3.318. Studies indicate that more than half of the United States high school journalism teachers have advised less than five years. With such a high percentage of first- and second-year advisers, it can be determined many of the motivational techniques were untried and many advisers answered because they were interested in the results, which will be sent to those who requested them.

Of those responding, 73.2% advise only the high school newspaper. Another 32.2% advise the newspaper and some other publication, including a yearbook, literary magazine or newsmagazine. Among advisers answering the survey, one advised a handbook; one, radio; and one, a page in a local newspaper.

Another section of the biographical information included the training of the adviser, both college classes and practical experience.

Of the respondents, 13.4% had undergraduate majors in journalism and another 3.6% had graduate degrees with an emphasis in journalism, making the total with degrees in journalism 17%.

Unfortunately, 39.3% of the respondents did not have even one hour of college credit in the field. This is a major concern in journalism education today.

However, some advisers did have some credits in college journalism, either taking them during their college career or taking extra courses after becoming an adviser. The number of quarter hours of credit, the number of advisers who fall into that category, and the per cent of the total surveyed are:

HOURS	TOTAL PERSONS	PER CENT OF TOTAL
1-5	15	13.4
6-14	10	8.9
15-24	10	8.9
25-35	12	10.7
36-50	2	1.8

These totals bring the total number of advisers with at least one hour of credit to 60.7% of those surveyed. The average number of hours earned, not including those with college degrees, was six hours. This would equate to probably two courses in journalism. This would be positive news, except for the 39.3% with absolutely no college journalism hours.

This situation is only a little brighter when considering if advisers worked on high school or college publications during their years. Twenty-nine or 25.9% of the 112 respondents never worked on a high school or college publication. Of the other respondents, 13 or 11.6% worked on their high school newspaper only, 12 or 10.7% worked on their college newspaper only, and 24 or 21.4% worked on their high school and college newspapers. Yearbook experience was also identified with six respondents or 5.4% working on their high school and college yearbooks, 8 or 7.1% working on their high school newspaper and college yearbook, 4 or 3.6% working on their college newspaper and yearbook, 4 or 3.6% working on their high school and college newspapers and college yearbook, and 12 or 10.7% working on their high school newspaper and yearbook.

A 2-to-1 ratio appeared in the state certification category with 65.2% of the advisers saying they were not certified and 34.8% saying they were certified. This does not necessarily correlate with the number of college credit hours advisers said they had. Of course, state certification requirements vary with some states requiring fewer hours than other states to certify high school journalism instructors.

Advisers do have other ways to gain training. One-third -- 38 or 33.9% -- said they have attended no workshops. All of these were first-year advisers. The most popular workshops according to the number in the survey who had attended them were: Ohio University with 22; Kent State University with 10; Bowling Green (Ohio) State University with 8; Ohio State University with 7; state journalism associations with 4; and Indiana University with 3. Since the advisers surveyed were mainly from Ohio, the Ohio workshops would be the best attended. Workshops in 28 other locations were also mentioned with about half of those surveyed attending more than one workshop or clinic.

Professional experience was also tabulated, and 70.5% had no professional experience. Other experience, where it was obtained and how many said they had worked were: newspaper with 15; public relations with 1; radio with 1; photography with 1; and 15 with experience in more than one field.

Because some of the motivational techniques would differ if a staff received credit for journalism or newspaper production, it was determined that one-third received no credit. Also determined was that twice as many schools did not have a separate newspaper office than did have one.

Most of the high school newspapers in the survey published bi-weekly or monthly. The breakdown is: monthly, 53 or 47.3%; bi-weekly, 29 or 25.9%; four to seven issues a year, 13 or 11.6%; 10 to 14 issues a year, 10 or 8.9%; weekly, 5 or 4.5%; zero to five issues a year, 1 or 0.9%; and a page in the local newspaper, 1 or 0.9%.

Was the adviser forced to accept the position, which could illuminate reasons for lack of enthusiasm for the production of the newspaper? Forty-nine or 43.8% said they requested the position, meaning most of the advisers did not request it. The reasons given for taking the position although they did not request it were: requirement to get the teaching job, 19.6%; principal's or superintendent's request, 19.6%; "drafted," 12.5%; and student request, 4.5%.

RESULTS

Advisers were asked to make two determinations of each technique listed. First, the respondent was to check whether or not he had tried the technique. Then he was to determine if the technique was of "Great Value," "Moderate Value," "Limited Value," or "No Value."

These answers were coded. Some advisers rated only those they had tried, so each technique had some missing values.

Computer tabulations produced clusters of listed techniques that had been tried by different percentages of the 112 respondents and were rated as "Great Value" or "Moderate Value." The researcher judged which cluster to place the technique into according to the following criteria:

1) Placing the techniques in groups according to how many of those responding to that item had tried the technique. For example, groups including those tried by 3/4 of the respondents, 1/2 of the respondents, or only a few of the respondents.

2) The items tried by 85% of the respondents and rated as "Great Value" or "Moderate Value" by a large percentage became the top-rated items. Those tried by 85% or more of the respondents and rated very low automatically became the lowest-rated items. This was also done with techniques tried by very few, because advisers had obviously ruled out that technique because it didn't work. The exceptions would be where the technique was not feasible at that school.

3) The remaining items were then clustered by judging according to how many had tried the technique had found it effective, noting ones which had a characteristic that would put it into a lower cluster. For example, if a technique was tried by only 38 persons, but it received a 84.7% rating by those who tried it, it would be in a higher category than one tried by 38 persons which received a 50% rating. The second one obviously "flopped" because one-half of those who tried it thought it had limited or no value.

The following list includes the techniques divided into clusters, with Cluster I being the highly rated items followed by lesser-rated items in descending order of clusters.

After each item is a statistic in each of three columns. The first column, Column A, is a fraction revealing the number of respondents to that item who had tried the technique as compared to those who had not tried the technique.

In Column B is the total number of persons who answered that item. If 112 persons had answered the item, 100 per cent of the respondents would have answered. The reason so many answers are missing from some items is because if an adviser had not tried the technique, he failed to rate it, thereby throwing out his participation in that question.

In Column C is the total percentage of those who tried the technique and rated in "Of Great Value" or "Of Moderate Value."

For example, in Cluster I (which includes the most successful motivational techniques as determined by the survey) "bylines" as a technique had been used by 9/10 of those who answered that items. A total of 97 persons out of the 112 respondents rated the "byline" item. Column C shows that when the computer crosstabulated the results, 92.5% of those who had tried the technique considered it "Of Great Value" or "Of Moderate Value."

CLUSTER I	A	B	C
Individual conferences with adviser to discuss problems in writing, etc.	9/10	94	83.4%
Recognition by professional media	2/3	62	95.
Field trips	9/10	86	93.2
Bylines	9/10	97	92.5
Game passes for sports reporters, photographers	9/10	83	90.2
"Hall of Fame" for outstanding staff members: annually	1/8	45	100.
Commissions (for advertising staff)	1/9	41	100.
Scholarships to summer institutes of workshops	2/3	68	95.7
Enter contests	3/4	70	92.7
Student articles in local newspaper	3/4	69	90.

CLUSTER II	A	B	C
Names in masthead	9/10	91	83.4%
Photos in school newspaper and/or yearbook	9/10	99	81.3
Award presentation at honor or senior assembly	4/5	83	87.9
Notes of congratulations to students	2/3	64	83.
Summer internships at local media	1/2	49	80.
Frame and hang awards (in newspaper office)	2/3	65	84.1
Bulletin board (in newspaper office)	4/5	81	84.8
Display of charts of column inches, hours on duty (for editorial staff)	1/4	51	84.6
Study halls in newspaper office	3/4	57	88.1
CLUSTER III			
Banquet	1/2	67	81.
Class speakers: Reporter from nearby newspaper	3/4	72	87.3
Financial reimbursement	1/3	56	85.7
Class speakers: From professional group (SDX, WICI)	1/3	38	84.7
"Best" awards for each issue (Best story, Best photo, etc.)	3/7	53	86.7
Adviser's speech of commendation at honor or senior assembly	2/3	72	87.
Posters (in newspaper office)	3/4	71	83.6
Class speakers: Alumni tell how newspaper was relevant and fun	1/2	47	82.6
Medals	1/3	52	88.9

CLUSTER IV	A	B	C
Class speakers: Student editor of college paper	1/2	45	76.2
Bound volume of year's papers	1/2	58	75.
Journalism bulletin board at school	1/2	54	72.4
Picnics	1/2	65	70.2
Parties	4/5	79	68.3
Hall passes	1/4	74	78.6
Displays of work in showcase	1/2	64	81.
CLUSTER V			
Complimentary tickets to special events	2/3	65	79.5
Press cards	2/3	69	79.2
Christmas party	2/3	60	65.8
Birthday parties for staff	1/3	52	70.6
Displays of work in journalism room or newspaper office	3/4	72	70.9
Present PTA program	1/8	42	80.
Displays of work at open house	2/3	63	68.3
CLUSTER VI			
Cups	1/8	45	100.
Monograms	2/97	42	100.
Award pins	2/3	80	59.7
Dances	1/3	48	56.3
Editors speak to classes within school	1/2	57	60.
Certificates	3/4	82	50.
Homecoming float	1/5	42	33.4
"Hall of Fame" for outstanding staff members: each issue	1/10	31	0.

ANALYSIS

Included in this section are comments from advisers on the various techniques, some which were written in the margin on the survey and some from answers to questions on the last page of the questionnaire. This section also includes variations on the techniques.

Individual conferences with the adviser (Cluster I) could include notes of encouragement during the year with copies sent to the parents and to the principal for the student's permanent file.

Professional media recongition (Cluster I) could include scholarships both to high school journalism workshops and to college (Cluster I). Scholarships are also available from professional chapters of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi (SPJ-SDX), Women in Communications, Inc. (WICI), Quill and Scroll; and even one Elks Lodge offers a $50 bond for anyone the adviser wishes in one community.

A much more common form of recognition from professional media was the publishing of student-written articles in the local newspaper. In The All-American Adviser, Roberta Fry and Kethleen Dyer Keilman wrote, "Send your paper regularly to the community newspaper office. A story picked up from the school paper with proper credit to the writer can encourage students greatly." (p. 26)

Field trips (Cluster I) have been tried by practically every adviser surveyed and were considered educational by most. The general tone of the comments were that field trips are a way to restore the adviser's vitality as well as the staff's. Suggestions included a professional speaking to the class or a tour of a newspaper plant. Visiting professional newspaper, radio and television stations was considered valuable for an "inside look."

However, some advisers did not consider field trips valuable. "I tried visiting local papers. However, the tour was limited because it was only through the technical side."

Another astute adviser noted, "As a whole, field trips have little value, particularly when the students know more about newspaper production than the public relations girls giving the tour." This points out that professional media, perhaps, should offer different kinds of tours for high school journalists as compared to Boy Scout troops.

Several innovative ideas in sending students on field trips were noted by advisers. Some staffs have visited art museums, photography exhibits and magazine publishing companies. Another visits other schools' newspaper staffs and finds talking with other students a valuable experience.

To boost morale, advisers have planned for students to attend professional football and baseball games and even Cedar Point Amusement Park in Sandusky, Ohio. Another adviser took students to the play "Front Page" and considered it of "good value" and to the movie "All the President's Men," which she termed "valuable."

Perhaps the most innovative idea was one that combined fun with the educational experience of writing a story. An adviser has found it "very valuable" to prepare staff members to go as reporters and observers with other classes who go to field trips, such as plays, museums, churches and industries.

Although commissions for the advertising staff appeared in Cluster I, many advisers said financially paying staff members was not possible due to a low budget and also was not proper because a student should want to learn something from an extracurricular activity, not be paid for it.

The same thoughts were expressed about Financial reimbursement, which appeared in Cluster III.

It would seem that the old stand-bys of cups, monograms, award pins and certificates are practically worthless as incentives. Students want criticism and praise. They want to earn privileges such as press cards and hall passes. The ones who really strive to excel deserve summer scholarships and internships.

Most of all, a staff needs an enthusiastic adviser. The importance of "staff spirit" and a sense of belonging keep many students interested in publications work. The interrelationahip of a staff and an enthusiastic adviser produces a healthy atmosphere.

An adviser of an award-winning newspaper said the best thing an adviser can do is create spirit to do the job. The adviser must be enthusiastic and it will become contagious, he said. "Fun once in awhile has merit. We occasionally have staff picnics, etc. -- all which help develop a sense of belonging, teamwork and 'staff spirit,' all of which I see as very important."

Another said, "Much of the motivation and enthusiasm and dedication in our press room (and they have generally been high) are the result of personal interaction. I try to set high standards for the staff, also fostering a sense of responsibility to the entire school. Personal commendation . . . and the direct pat on the back among the staff members is a very strong motivation."

Another award-winning adviser volunteered, "There is no <u>one</u> way to motivate a staff. The secret is to know each member's individual strengths and build on those strengths so they interrelate with the needs of the entire working staff . . . Their best reward is a paper that they themselves are proud of."

CONCLUSIONS

All comments and ratings of the adviser point to the fact that if the adviser is not enthusiastic, the students will not be and it will reflect in the newspaper.

The secret seems to be in giving students individual attention and forming a bond to make them become a close-knit group. The newspaper staff should also not become such a "clique" that it excludes involvement with the rest of the school. Reporters possess power, but they must be fair and willing to spotlight all worthwhile activities in a school.

Although the ideas in this survey are clustered, any ideas for awards should be thoughtfully considered. Too many awards can make the tribute seem less important. An adviser's brief speech of commendation at an assembly before a student's peers may mean more than a tangible reward. As an astute respondent noted, "Those items that create a meritorious form of recognition of student journalists' achievement work well if items are indeed earned and deserved. You can't recognize everyone or everything or they lose effectiveness as incentives."

The most important thing an adviser can remember to motivate students is to give credit when credit is due. Recognition of a good performance will produce pride in a student's work.

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